



A Remembrance

by Gladys Eng Chin

Gladys Eng at 5th grade. circa 1944

I was born in Newark, NJ, at 202 Mulberry Street, to be exact. We lived on the first floor, or really the second floor. I lived there until I was five years old, then moved to 56 Green Street, just a block away and around the corner.

We had a three-room apartment facing the front and I remember I loved looking out the window and/or climbing the fire escape. I guess you could say I was a "tomboy." Of course I knew everyone in the building and would run amok visiting everyone, although most times uninvited. My favorite "hangout" was in the apartment of Frank, James and Mabel Joyce Eng, who lived on the floor above us. Mabel, or Joyce as she preferred to be called, was like my big sister and Frank was my best friend. They seemed so worldly to me, since, although I had two older brothers and a cousin who were a part of my family, I grew up like an only child, since all three went into the service when I was 5 or 6.

It was a fun time growing up in the '40's... we were all so innocent and life was so simple except for World War II. I was the only girl in my age group who was "out on the streets." Fay Hong was a year older, Violet Kee Chi was a year younger and later on May Young moved to "Chinatown."

My father owned a grocery store on Mulberry Street and I was always in and out and helping out too. I remember being the "cashier" on Sundays when people would come in to buy groceries. I didn't always make the right change, but everyone was honest back then. Work was always fun when one

didn't have to do it. I didn't have to do it, but wanted to. I learned a lot being in my father's store. I even went to the "live" chicken market to buy chickens; it was always a "pullet" or a "spring" chicken.

I stopped going to the chicken market because of the "nightmarish" occurrence that I experienced. It was the usual pullet order and I was waiting for the man to clean the chicken, weighing about 3 pounds, which I would carry all the way home, about 1 mile. (Remember, I was only about 7 or 8 when I did this.) Usually the butcher would chop off the chicken's head and drain the blood, but this one time the reflex action of the chicken caused it to jump out of the man's hands and it ran around the market, headless. I ran screaming from that place forever!!!

Living at the Green Street house, our back kitchen windows used to face the kitchen windows of Shanghai Restaurant. We used to look up and wave to the Eng Wong family members and staff as they worked in the restaurant. Shanghai Restaurant was another one of my favorite "hangouts." I use to go up and "snack" on whatever I could get my hands on!!! Boy, in those days the egg roll and wonton skins were made fresh each day, like a very thin crepe and I would roll one up with sugar and munch away. I was a spoiled brat!!! Nah, more precocious than bratty!!! But, I use to pay my way...I would help the waiters clean and wipe down the silverware, helped make the wontons and package the noodles. I was everywhere. All this before I turned 10.

In those days Newark had a thriving Chinatown. There were several grocery stores and several restaurants. Of course the main commodity was the gambling. Men came over in droves from New York City until the police shut it all down.

In 1948 I moved to Kearny, NJ, and my father decided to go into the laundry business there. It was very hard for me to move from my old neighborhood and my old school, Lafayette St. School. I was in the 4th grade and hated to leave my favorite teacher, so I commuted from Kearny to Newark every morning to finish up my 4th grade year. Finally in 5th grade I reluctantly transferred to the Kearny school system, but came down to Newark Chinatown almost every day and always on weekends. I hated leaving my old friends. I even enrolled in Chinese School, just so I would have an excuse to go to Newark every day. I did learn a little there.

As I got older and met Sarah and Tom Mon in my teenage years, I became a fixture in New York Chinatown. I met Sarah through her sister Mabel who married my cousin, Joe Eng. I told them "they started it all." So because of that union, I was instrumental in having the "New York" girls meet the "New Jersey" guys and several marriages came about because of that marriage. I in turn married a New York boy, since all the New Jersey boys were my "cousins."

During those times we had some wild parties, wild for those times, but tame for modern day. The first big party we organized was held in the back of Canton Restaurant which was on Mulberry Street, and that was a blast. The other big party that comes to mind was the one held at Stevens Institute, which I believe was through the courtesy of Henry Mon who was a student there at the time.

We use to congregate at Old First Church on Broad Street on Thursdays for sports and get-togethers. We would come back to Mulberry Street afterwards and hang out in the diner for snacks. Those were fun times.

No one likes to live in the past, but I wouldn't mind going back for a visit. Those were fun times.

Gladys (Eng) Chin
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Gladys Eng sitting on the steps of her home at 56 Green Street, Newark, NJ. circa. 1940s

